

to be considered deliberately and fully at the appropriate time. I think it is wise that we approach it from the standpoint of what is good for the country; that neither side try to make undue political points at the outset. Otherwise, we are not going to get anywhere. I simply say, I share my colleague's concern and desire to get anything up for a vote.

It has taken 49 years to get the matter I am about to discuss up for a vote in this body, so I would like to turn to that now unless my colleague has any more comments.

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Senator.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMS). Twenty minutes has expired. Morning business is now closed.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO LIMIT CONGRESSIONAL TERMS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of Senate Joint Resolution 21, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A joint resolution (S.J. Res. 21) proposing a constitutional amendment to limit congressional terms.

The Senate resumed consideration of the joint resolution.

Pending:

Thompson (for Ashcroft) amendment No. 3692, in the nature of a substitute.

Thompson (for Brown) amendment No. 3693 (to amendment No. 3692), to permit each State to prescribe the maximum number of terms to which a person may be elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Thompson (for Ashcroft) amendment No. 3694, of a perfecting nature.

Thompson (for Brown) amendment No. 3695 (to amendment No. 3694), to permit each State to prescribe the maximum number of terms to which a person may be elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Thompson amendment No. 3696, to change the length of limits on Congressional terms to 12 years in the House of Representatives and 12 years in the Senate.

Thompson (for Brown) amendment No. 3697 (to amendment No. 3696), to permit each State to prescribe the maximum number of terms to which a person may be elected to the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Thompson motion to recommit the resolution to the Committee on the Judiciary with instructions.

Thompson (for Ashcroft) amendment No. 3698 (to the motion to recommit), to change instructions to report back with limits on Congressional terms of 6 years in the House of Representatives and 12 years in the Senate.

Thompson (for Brown) modified amendment No. 3699 (to amendment No. 3698), to change instructions to report back with language allowing each State to set the terms of members of the House of Representatives and the Senate from that State.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, this is a constitutional amendment to limit the terms of Members of Congress. It calls for a limitation of 12 years, 2

terms in the U.S. Senate; a limitation of 12 years, 6 terms in the House of Representatives.

As I indicated, the last vote on term limitations in this body was in 1947, so it has taken about 49 years to get the second vote on this, not that anybody has been particularly pushing for it.

I believe it is the first constitutional amendment for term limits to ever come out of committee. This had a full committee hearing. It passed out of the Judiciary Committee, and now, for the first time, a committee bill is on the floor ready for consideration. I think it is long overdue.

In this body, it has been my observation that we pay as close attention as we can to what the American people want. We pay as close attention as we can to what our constituents want. We have offices all across the various States. We go to those offices, we listen, we get tallies on what people are calling in about, what people's concerns are. We go out and we pride ourselves, as elected Members, having town hall meetings, and we say a large part of the purpose of that is to listen, to see what is going on so we can be reflective of the opinions of the people that we represent.

We run our campaigns on the same basis. We say, let us be your Representative and we will go up and listen to the people. Let us turn the Congress back to the people. We try to respond every time we get the feeling that 51 percent of our constituents want something. There is nothing more responsive than someone who has been elected to office, who feels his constituents are pressing for something, even by the barest of margins—except in one area. That is the area we are dealing with here today, term limits.

We see poll after poll after poll, and we poll early and often. Sometimes it is like all that is happening around here is a rendition of those polls. My colleague from Massachusetts was talking about how many women favored minimum wage, how many Republicans, how many Democrats, all based on polling results. Who is ahead in the Presidential race? All these various issues. Who is for us and who is against us? By what margin? The distinction between last week, when 52 percent of the people were for this proposition, and the week before last when only 49 percent of the people were for this proposition, so we see a little movement there.

There is extreme, extreme attention to the temperature of the American people and to our constituents, except about one thing, and that is term limits. Poll after poll indicates that upward of 75 percent of the American people favor term limits, and the overwhelming majority of States and localities that have had the opportunity to vote on term limits have come out in favor of term limits. Mr. President, 22 States have imposed term limits on themselves, even while other States were not doing so, saying: We think it

is an idea whose time has come. It would be for the benefit of America for us to set the example, and we are willing to impose it on ourselves even though there is no obligation for other States to do so.

Yet, even in light of this overwhelming majority of the American people who feel something is basically going wrong with their country and they are searching for something fundamental to do about it, we pay absolutely no attention to what is going on. We pay no attention to the overwhelming sentiment of the American people with regard to this one area.

The case can be made that we ought to be more reflective in some cases, that we ought to be a little more isolated. This is supposed to be a deliberative body and sometimes we do not take enough time to really reflect on the important issues that are facing us. Sometimes we get too caught up in the number of bills that we can pass and the gamesmanship of what is going on in this town. But, why is this the only one area where this rule seems to apply to this body, and no other area? The answer, of course, is because in a Congress that busies itself in regulating other people's lives and purifying other institutions, other businesses, other individuals, that changes when it comes to doing something about ourselves, even something as innocuous as a 12-year term. This constitutional amendment would not even need to be ratified for 7 years. Then it would be prospective. It is the most minimal first step toward trying to put us in a position to face the 21st century that we could possibly think of. It probably would not affect anybody in this body right now, another 12 years on top of what they have already served, and on top of the 7 years it might take for ratification of the constitutional amendment. That is not exactly a drastic move, not exactly a revolutionary change. Yet we have all this difficulty even getting to first base.

Let us talk about what this is not all about, because the detractors of term limits, in their scrambling around to try to come up with reasons why in this particular case the overwhelming majority of the American people are wrong, have set the terms of the debate for us, in many cases.

What it is not about is vindictiveness. A lot of people are angry with the Congress of the United States, but this is not about vindictiveness. Life is too short for that.

On the contrary, Mr. President, I really believe that imposing term limits on ourselves would do more to restore the dignity and the esteem of Congress with the American people than anything else. I pointed out the other day that columnist George Will wrote a book awhile back called "Restoration," and it was about term limits. Most people would have a hard time seeing that connection until they got into it and read it.

The point is, and a very valid point, I think, indeed, is that at the time our

country was founded, people would line the streets and say, "Long live Congress, long live Congress." Can you imagine what most of them would be saying today if they had a shot at making a comment at us parading down the street together?

What has changed in that period of time? We have lost the respect of the American people. I believe this self-imposition is something that the people feel in their hearts is right and something that would, in one way, be to our own detriment—it might cut a few careers a few years short—but would do more to restore the faith of the United States people in the U.S. Congress than anything else. And that, Mr. President, is probably more important than anything else, because Congress is the message deliverer, and we have some tough messages to deliver to this country. A lot of it is not going to be well received. A lot of it is not being well received, but it is the truth, and it has to do with the future of our country and the things we need to do to make sure we fulfill that tacit understanding that each generation is supposed to have with the next, and that is, that we will leave this place a little better off than we found it. We are not fulfilling that commitment now.

Another thing it is not about is simply changing new faces for old faces. There is nothing that inherently goes wrong with someone because they have been around a place for a while. There is nothing beneficial about changing a new face for an old face if a new face comes in with the same attitude as the old one had. That is not what it is all about.

In fact, I am willing to concede that you could make a pretty good case for the proposition that for the majority of our history in this country, our system served us pretty well. We went through two world wars in this country, we went through a Civil War, we went through a Great Depression, and we had to dip into the till pretty deep sometimes, but we always came back and balanced our budget. We had a balanced budget as late as 1969 in this country.

Our Founding Fathers did not address term limits. It never occurred to them that we would wind up with the professionalism and the careerism that we see today.

So, for a long, long time, we could get by with what we had, because we did not have the culture of spending, we did not have the growth of Government and all the demands and pressures that are on us day in and day out to spend more and more and more. We did not have members so faced with the proposition, are we going to get along with people and get reelected by saying yes to any and every spending measure that comes down the pike, or are we going to risk our political future and say, "We can't do things the same old way anymore; we can't necessarily grow each program at 10 percent a year anymore."

Everybody in this town knows that—both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue and both sides of the aisle. We know that, and yet we are afraid, basically, to say that. Or somebody says it and somebody else will get up and say they are trying to harm old people and trying to harm young people to get political advantage out of it for the next election. We get into that cycle: scare people momentarily. Sometimes it works, and yet the American people have this sense, this innate sense that something is really going wrong, something is not working right.

So it is not about vindictiveness or even throwing the rascals out. My goodness, we in this body, anything that we are able to accomplish, we stand on the shoulders of giants. Many giants have been in this body. I hold this body in the highest esteem. I have reverence for this body. I have never understood why somebody would want to be part of an institution for which they did not have any respect.

I used to come here as a very young man and sit up in the gallery and watch the great debates that would take place, even at that stage, and that has not been that long ago. People were talking about the issues. People seemed to have a little bit more time to deliberate. We were still right at the point where we were capable of balancing the budget. That time has changed.

So what is it about? What it is about is not all the little things that you hear debated back and forth on the 6 o'clock news. If you cannot get it out in 15 or 20 seconds, it is going to be totally lost. It is not about new faces, it is not about experience, it is not about whether the lobbyists or the staffs are for it or against it. It is about dealing with the monumental problems that are facing this country, problems that are so great and so ingrained that many thoughtful people on both sides of the aisle think that it is already too far gone for us to do anything about. And it is about the fact that we are proving ourselves incapable under current circumstances of dealing with it.

We are mortgaging our future, and it has to do with nothing more basic than our need to perpetuate ourselves and to avoid risk, which too often means avoiding the truth, and, therefore, we continue to go down the road that we know is bound to lead to disaster unless we make significant changes.

What does this desire for reelection and staying do to us? It causes us to spend. It all comes down to the growth of Government and the culture of spending. This is not a partisan issue. You can pick your administration or you can pick who is in control of Congress—the House or the Senate—and go back for the last few decades, and I am willing to say that there is enough fault on either side; that neither side can take partisan advantage of this if you view it objectively.

Every time someone stood up to speak the simple truth about the fu-

ture and took their eyes for a few minutes off the next election and tried to do something that would make this country stronger for the future, the other side would invariably get up and take partisan advantage of it, scare people, go on television with 30-second ads, and whoever brought it up would cower back to their corner, not to be brought up again for a while.

Mr. President, there is no simple solution to what I am talking about. It is fundamental. We have gotten ourselves into a deep ditch. We did not get there overnight, and we will not get ourselves out of it overnight, but we have to start examining possibilities that will put us in a position of doing something about it.

How can we continue down this road? This proposal will not affect me personally either way and it will affect hardly any of the Members in this Congress, I would think. But if we had a system that concentrated on how best could we operate in the next century in order to solve these problems, I think that term limits would be a major, major step toward doing that.

I believe if we open the system up so that people knew that these jobs would be open from time to time, in the first place you would draw more people into the system. Right now, unless you have access to millions of dollars—and usually through incumbency, which allows you to raise millions of dollars—it is not a participation that you can enjoy as an average citizen. We have 250 million citizens in this country, and one small fraction of 1 percent are all that have any realistic shot of ever setting foot on this floor.

So bring more people in. What kind of motivation would those people have? If people were coming into the system knowing from day one that this could not be their career, that, hopefully, they have already had a career and, hopefully, they will have another one and this will be an interruption to a career and not a career in and of itself, would they be as frightened of the special interests?

Would they be as frightened of the poll numbers? Would they be as frightened of the proposition that 51 percent of the people might get temporarily mad at them if they spoke the truth and said, "You can have a 7 percent increase this year but you can't have 10 percent"?

I think we would have people who would come in with a different agenda. I think we would have people who would come in with the idea, more likely—not universal, because nothing is—more likely that, I'm going to give a few years to my country. Just because it is 12 years does not mean you have to stay 12 years either. That is a maximum. Give a few years to my country the way they used to, the way they used to some years ago, and try to do the right thing. It is called public service. That is what it used to be. Citizens used to come in and do that. That is what the Founding Fathers had

in mind, and that would go on. I think it is only a Congress which is peopled by individuals who have that attitude that is ever, ever going to get us out of the monumental straits we are in.

By the year 2000, the net interest paid on the national debt will surpass defense spending and is projected to become the second largest Federal expenditure after Social Security. This is from the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform—the bipartisan commission. By 2012, unless appropriate policy changes are made, projected spending on entitlement programs and interest on the debt will grow so rapidly they will consume all tax revenues collected by the Federal Government—all tax revenues. In 2030, to bring the deficit down to the current level, the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform concluded that either all Federal taxes would have to be increased by 85 percent or all Federal spending programs would have to be cut in half. This bipartisan commission is telling you what is going to happen. Have you heard it anywhere else?

By 2012, mandatory spending, interest, and entitlements will exceed all Federal revenues, leaving no money for the Federal Government to spend at its discretion on programs like education, law enforcement, research and development, national defense, and health research. By 2030, entitlement spending alone is projected to exceed all Federal revenues.

We have had a philosophy now for several years in this town that a Senator is judged in large part by the amount of pork he can bring back to his State, not realizing that ultimately what is good for Tennessee is good for America and what is bad for America cannot be good for Tennessee or any other State.

We have a proliferation of interest groups as we pass more and more laws and regulate more and more things. Those who are the objects of those laws and those who are being regulated naturally come to town to tell us what we are doing to them. When these programs are ingrained and people are used to receiving these moneys, there is no turning back. It is always more and more and more.

You attend hearings for a month, and you will never hear anybody coming back in saying they want to give some money back to the Federal Government. It all goes the other way. We are now facing what one philosopher said a long time ago; that is, the ultimate test for any democracy is whether or not, when they discover they can pay themselves out of their own treasury, there can ever be any turning back.

The other thing we need to address, along with the absolutely horrendous fiscal problem that lies for our children to keep up with, is the public cynicism. Out of all of this trying to be responsive, out of all of this poll taking, out of all this technology that we have to monitor the pulse so we can claim we

are doing just exactly what the people want us to do, what do the people think about their Government?

A very thoughtful gentleman by the name of Haynes Johnson wrote a book a year or so ago called "Divided We Fall." He stated the following:

For at least a decade, and in reality far longer, people at the bottom have grown increasingly alienated from those at the top, and especially from leaders who seem unable and often unwilling to address their concerns. Over the last generation, surveys on public alienation have tracked America's steadily eroding confidence in its leaders and in its institutions—a decline so uniform and so steep that it raises the most serious questions about public faith in the democratic system and therefore the ability of that system to function.

Mr. President, that is serious stuff. Mr. Johnson went around the country talking to people, and spent a long time in researching this book. He pointed out a recent Harris poll indicating that, "At the bottom in public esteem were law firms, with only 11 percent of Americans expressing great confidence in them. Barely above them was Congress at 12 percent." Thank God for law firms.

He further states:

Traditionally, American politicians are driven by the short-term approach. From city council members to members of Congress, emphasis is on the "quick fix" to complex problems and on claiming political credit for responding to immediate needs. The result, as we have seen, is postponement of decisions on major long-term issues. Thus, the real size of the budget deficit is masked. Genuine attempts to reduce it are put off to the next session of Congress—and the next and the next. Action is not taken today; it is always planned for tomorrow, to take place in what Washington policymakers, in typical semantic obfuscation, call "the out years." The out years never quite arrive; they continue to lie beyond grasp. So the debts increase and the charade continues with each new congressional session.

I ask my colleagues whether or not that sounds familiar.

Finally, he states that:

These are among the many reasons the political system remains under siege. A more elemental one involves the public conviction that the American political system has produced a generation of politicians in both parties who can't, or won't, tell the truth, because if they do, they will not win; and that lie permeates American politics.

It is a sad situation, Mr. President, sad situation. For those of us who simply say, the status quo, we cannot make any fundamental changes, things are going great, I think the evidence is overwhelmingly to the contrary.

So, Mr. President, I say let us give the States an opportunity. That is all we are doing with this constitutional amendment. Let us give the States an opportunity to address this issue and see whether or not the people really believe what the polls indicate that they do. I feel like that is the least we can do and is our foremost responsibility to see if we cannot better derive a system in the future that would allow us to cope with this unbelievable cynicism of the American people toward us and our

clear inability to get a handle on problems that are going to be the ruination of the next generation. I yield the floor.

[Disturbance in the visitors' galleries.]

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Just to mention to those in the gallery, it is against Senate rules to have any show of approval or disapproval of any statements made on actions taken on the Senate floor.

Mr. ABRAHAM addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Michigan.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. President.

Let me begin by offering my appreciation and compliments to the Senators from Tennessee and Missouri for having worked as hard as they have on the issue of term limits and bringing the issue of term limits to the attention of the U.S. Senate.

I think our freshman class is strongly supportive as a group of the term limits effort. I think that Senators who have led this battle deserve special acknowledgement for the support they have given. I rise today and thank them and also make some comments of my own which are pertinent to this debate.

Mr. President, in my State of Michigan, the people have already spoken on an important issue the Senate will consider here this week; that is, term limits. In 1992, Michigan voters passed term limits for Federal officials by an overwhelming margin—6 years for the U.S. House of Representatives and 12 years for the U.S. Senate.

I repeat, it was an overwhelming margin, Mr. President. This was not a close vote. In 1993, as a candidate for the U.S. Senate, and in 1994 I ran on a platform committed to trying to make certain that the will of the people of my State was acknowledged and was followed by the Congress of the United States.

The fight for term limits in Washington, however, must continue. I pledge to fight in Washington and make sure that the limits the people of Michigan voted for would be permissible. Term limits are widely observed at other levels of Government, Mr. President.

The President of the United States, 41 Governors, 20 State legislators, and hundreds of State and local officials currently abide by term limits. Why not Congress?

There has been an overwhelming expression of support for term limits in State after State. Since 1990, more than 25 million votes have been cast by voters in 22 States supporting congressional term limits. Polls have consistently shown that more than three-quarters of the American people favor term limits. I believe, Mr. President, that it is our obligation to fight to make sure that the people's voice does not go unheard.

The 104th Congress is the first Congress to have recorded votes in either Chamber on term limits. The Senate

vote this week will join the 1995 House vote to produce first-ever votes in both Houses. The vote in the House was held in March 1995 and received a majority of 227 votes. Passage, however, of a constitutional amendment would have required a two-thirds majority, or 290 votes.

For the first time in history, the Senate will vote on term limits. While the measure is not currently expected to receive the necessary 67 votes required for passage, this vote is an important beginning to what I believe is an inevitable outcome. While approval by two-thirds of the House and Senate will not be easy, the support of 75 percent of the American people will make a difference as we continue this important effort.

When I campaigned for the Senate in 1994 in my State, I heard from one end of Michigan to the other a consistent and very, very responsive, positive public outpouring of support for term limits. People felt that the Congress, in particular, and Washington as an institution was out of touch. They felt that a lot of factors were at play, but, most importantly, they felt that too many people ran for Congress or for the U.S. Senate, went to Washington, and ultimately stayed so long that they lost sight of the reasons that they ran for in the first place.

Promises in campaigns were seldom, if ever, kept. Indeed, by the end of a term the promises of the previous campaign had often been totally forgotten. People felt that this lack of contact and communication, this out-of-touch, Washington, inside-the-beltway mentality was the reason that Washington had not been able to deal with important problems confronting America and, in particular, the problems of the Federal budget deficit and runaway Federal spending.

People in my State believe that they have sent too many of their hard-earned earnings to Washington. They would like to keep more of what they earn. They feel the Federal tax burden is too high. They cannot understand why they have to balance their family budget, but we in Washington have not been able for 25 years to balance the Federal budget.

The reason, they feel, more than any other that has led to this problem, this lack of responsiveness, is that too many Federal officials have been away from home too long, too many Federal officials have lost touch with voters back home and do not understand the things that motivate the average working families in Michigan.

Mr. President, I do not think Michigan is atypical. I suspect that virtually every Member of this body hears the same thing in their State. I suspect Members of the House of Representatives, likewise, hear the same sentiments expressed to them when they are in their constituency.

Now, this Congress has begun to move, I believe, in the right direction to address some of these concerns. Last

year, for the first time we voted in the very first action taken by the Congress, to apply the laws that apply to the rest of the country to Members of Congress themselves. We put an end, in the Congressional Accountability Act, to the double standard that said that things we adopted here as Federal law were fine for the rest of America but not fine for ourselves. That has begun to change the way we do things here in the U.S. Senate.

I have been intrigued by the fact that so many of my colleagues and I have found that meeting the various labor and other laws, requirements that we now are required to follow, have changed the way we operate our office and made us more mindful and concerned about labor relations and other issues that come on a day-to-day basis before us in our Senate offices. In the same way that has put us more in touch, I think nothing will put Congress more in touch with people back home than a frequent and regular turnover in the composition of the House and Senate of the United States.

Mr. President, I believe that the term limits movement is a movement that will only grow. If 75 percent favor term limits today, I believe it will be even a higher percentage in the years to come. That is why whether or not we are able to succeed this year in passing term limits, it is only a matter of time, I believe, before we will have term limits as part of our Constitution.

To that, I want to commend the majority leader, Senator DOLE, for scheduling the vote on term limits here in the Senate. For all the talk about bringing reform to Congress, I believe our best approach to make Congress better is through term limits. I urge all of my colleagues to support this much-needed reform of our political system. I urge them to support it because it is the right direction to take. I urge them to support it because it has such strong popular support. I also urge them to support it because I think it is only right that the citizens of the various States have the chance to set the limits on terms of Federal officials.

To conclude, that the citizens of Michigan do not have the constitutional authority to determine how long their Members of Congress and their U.S. Senators may serve, is, in my judgment, a strong repudiation of the rights of people in a free democracy to make decisions for themselves.

Mr. President, I close on this note, by urging my colleagues to support the term limit efforts we are undertaking this week.

Before I yield the floor, I will ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 2 minutes to make a brief statement.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SYMPATHY TO MICHIGAN FAMILY

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I rise today to express my deep condolences

to the entire Bitar family of Dearborn, MI, who lost their two sons due to the most recent violence in Lebanon that occurred last Thursday. Hadi, who was age 8, and his brother, Abdul Mohsin, age 9, were visiting their grandmother in their home village of Qana during their spring break from school when the fighting broke out last week. They sought refuge in the United Nations shelter, which was tragically bombed.

The loss of civilian lives, Mr. President, no matter where it occurs, is always devastating, but it is especially tragic when children, in this case, 8- and 9-year-old children, are killed senselessly. When a loss such as this occurs so close to home, as it did in an important city in my State, many individuals in the Michigan community were affected. They feel this very deeply. I am here today to speak on their behalf.

This occurrence highlights both the urgency and the necessity of bringing peace to the Middle East. I strongly urge the administration to persist in trying to negotiate a cease-fire in Lebanon and to bring an end to the hostilities immediately. I sincerely hope that no more tragedies such as this occur and that no more innocent lives are lost while these negotiations persist. Yesterday, I attended a special prayer service for the two boys who were killed last week. The ribbon I am wearing today, Mr. President, was given to me at that service as a tribute to the lives that have been lost. All I can say, Mr. President, is I intend to be on the floor every day to talk about what is going on, and these tragedies, until, hopefully, we will see a cease-fire and an end to the senseless killing and the bloodshed.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO LIMIT CONGRESSIONAL TERMS

The Senate continued with consideration of the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The amendment before the body is amendment 3698.

Is there further debate?

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, thank you for the recognition. I want to thank my friend, the Senator from Michigan, for his outstanding analysis. I also want to express my sympathy to him and to those citizens of Michigan whose children were victims of the latest bombings. I commend him for his work in this area and thank him for bringing our attention to this matter.

Mr. President, I want to talk about term limits. I want to mention some important reasons why I think it is essential that Members of this body support the opportunity of the States to ratify a constitutional amendment.

The Senate does not have the authority to amend the Constitution. We merely have the authority to extend to the States the right to ratify a proposed amendment to the Constitution. To vote against this proposal is basically to say that the wisdom of the